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ABSTRACT

The relationship between federal policy and educational research is discussed by the Assistant Secretary for Research and Improvement and Counselor to the Secretary of the Department of Education. Issues covered include federal funding, with particular attention to the department's recent fiscal year budget submissions for the Office of Educational Research and Improvement (OERI), OERI structural changes resulting in the creation of the National Center for Education Statistics, the National Assessment of Educational Progress, OERI research centers, research grants competition, fellowships, information dissemination, and the Educational Resources information Center (ERIC). The separation of research from statistics and assessment within the federal structure, and the thriving nature of mission-related research are discussed. The general perception of educational research as lacking real value is discussed, and education is compared to law and contrasted to medicine. Finally, a paradigmatic shift in educational research is advocated that is based on the successful and widely-accepted model of mission-related research. (TJH)

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"Lessons Learned: Federal Policy Making and the Education Research Community"

(Remarks prepared for delivery to the American Educational Research Association, April 7, 1988, New Orleans, Louisiana, by Chester E. Finn, Jr., Assistant Secretary for Research & Improvement and Counselor to the Secretary, U.S. Department of Education.)

The assigned title of this session is a little ambiguous, so let me not be. I will focus on policy making **in regard** to education research (and related matters), not the bearing of research on federal policy making in general or even on the making of federal **education** policy.

My intention is to ruminate and reflect, candidly but I hope constructively, after almost three years in this post and nearly two decades spent stepping in and out of the intersection between federal policy and education research.

Let me commence by taking stock of some of the changes we have witnessed during these past three years in the Office of Educational Research and Improvement (OERI) which, for better or worse, remains the only unit in the federal government that is explicitly dedicated to the collection and analysis of information and the support of systematic inquiry about education.

Fiscal matters first. Last week I appeared for third time before the House Appropriations Committee. For third time I asked--as, for the third time, the President has asked in his budget submission--for an increase in funding for education research and statistics. For Fiscal '89 we have requested $81 million--some $21 million more than the amount that had been appropriated for the fiscal year I arrived in the middle of (FY'85) and some $24 million more than we were actually able to spend in the sequester year of Fiscal '86. I don't want to break my arm patting our team on the back but in this field, to paraphrase Senator Dirksen, $21 million here and $24 million there and pretty soon you're talking about "real money".

It is obviously too soon to know what Congress will do with our FY'89 budget submission, the largest administration budget request for these activities since 1981. But let me remind you of what happened the first two times we ran around this barn. For FY'87 we got **none** of the additional funds we requested for the purposes for which we requested them, though $4 million we had not asked for was tacked onto the

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appropriation for a so-called "rural initiative", these funds restricted to the Regional Educational Laboratories. Save for that addition, the research and statistics account was level-funded.

For FY'88, there was good news on the statistics and assessment side of OERI, an appropriation of almost $21 million, up from about $14 million for these activities the previous year, a boost of 48 percent, the first non-incremental increase in memory for federal education data-gathering. As for the rest of the request, however, far from the increase we had asked for, we experienced a painful cut. The labs absconded with another $3.8 million for another installment of the "rural initiative", even as the total appropriation for the non-statistical part of our agency (what I sometimes still think of as the "old NIE" part) was reduced $2.1 million below the President's request. The upshot of the rural earmark and the reduced total was--is, for this is the fiscal year that we're now in the middle of--the most severely strapped funding situation in a long time.

Turning next to matters structural: as is well known, Secretary Bennett reorganized OERI in the summer of '85, putting the NIE out of its institutional misery and combining it with the old National Center for Education Statistics and the Center for Libraries and Education Information, amalgamating them into what we termed the "New OERI". Congress ratified this arrangement, first by not undoing the administrative reorganization during the period when it might have objected and then by incorporating our design into the Higher Education Amendments of 1986. All was finally stable, we supposed. And for about two years this was indeed so. But no longer.

A week ago, the Senate-House conference committee putting the finishing touches on this year's omnibus elementary/secondary legislation also made a huge change in OERI's structural arrangements. Our statistics unit is to be broken off into a semi-autonomous agency, called (once again) the National Center for Education Statistics. It is to have its own presidentially-appointed commissioner; its own procurement, personnel and publishing authorities; and a separate line in the Department's salary and expenses budget. In truth, the organizational trappings are almost identical to those of the NIE, though this time they pertain to the statistical rather than the research side of the house.

It isn't just the structure that is similar. I'm struck, too, by the parallelism of the underlying motives, which appear nearly identical to those that sixteen years ago led to establishment of the NIE: a desire for the function embodied in the new agency to have higher status, greater visibility, more resources, and thicker insulation from political

influence. I'll return to some of these issues later. For now let me simply note that what has for several years been a reasonably stable organizational structure is about to be massively disrupted once more.

As for the substance of the statistical enterprise, the past several years have seen a virtual renaissance. (In fairness, it should be noted that some of the most needed changes had been launched by Emerson Elliott and his team in the months before I arrived on the scene.) We have overhauled virtually all the agency's basic data systems; accellerated the collection, analysis and publication of statistical information; filled some of the worst data gaps (or at least set into motion sequences that will lead to their being filled during the next few years); and made huge strides in terms of quality control.

On the assessment front we've made good progress, some of it embodied in new NAEP provisions agreed to by the aforementioned Senate-House conferees. These provisions pick up most of the recommendations of the Alexander-James task force pertaining to the overhaul of "the Nation's Report Card", including wider subject coverage, new governance arrangements and the beginnings of state-by-state assessments. Additionally, NAEP has moved into previously unexplored subjects; has made good progress in "scaling" its data to facilitate the examination of trends-over-time; and has considerably improved the dissemination--and intelligibilty--of its reports.

Turning now to the "research and improvement" portions of the enterprise, our Office of Research is presently administering 19 research centers, ten of them begun (or renewed) a few months after I arrived in 1985 and seven of them the products of competitions since then. Two more center competitions are now underway, one having to do with technology, the other with school leadership. And our FY'89 budget request contemplates two more competitions, a largish center to examine the effective schooling of disadvantaged youngsters and a smaller one in civics and citizenship education that is intended to join the five subject-matter centers that we launched (on our own or jointly with the Arts Endowment) during FY'87. (The Humanities Endowment has just funded a research center in history. So the civics/citizenship center we're planning will actually bring the government-wide total to seven.)

In addition to centers, the Office of Research is now running the third consecutive field-initiated research grants competition, something we were able to revive in FY'86 after several years of dormancy. It is now mandated by law at half a million dollars a year minimum funding, but we were able to spend a bit more than that on it in each of the two previous

years. I don't expect that to be the case in FY'88, due to the extreme tightness of our financial situation, but the administration's FY'89 request again seeks a full million dollars.

We also revived the idea of research fellowships and were able to support a total of twelve such out of FY'86 and '87 funds. We had conducted the competition and peer review process for the FY'88 crop and had some superb candidates ready to fund but were forced to abort this because of insufficient appropriations.

Perhaps the other accomplishment of which I'm proudest, these past three years, is the considerable progress we've made in translating research findings (and statistical analyses) into English and getting them into the hands of individuals who might benefit from them. You're probably familiar with the What Works publications, the two editions of which have now been distributed to the tune of 575,000 copies since March, 1986. But you may not know that OERI has itself produced a total of 269 publications of various kinds between July 1985 and this week. Nearly 200 more are being drafted, edited or are en route to the printer. Additionally, our major institutional grantees and contractors (centers, labs, ERIC clearinghouses, NAEP, etc.) have published upwards of 1500 more during the same period.

Implicit in this much-enlarged set of translation-and-dissemination activities is a change in OERI's basic strategy, indeed a change in the very definition of our "constituency". Much as Bill Bennett has recast the Department's constituency, construing it as education-minded citizens rather more than education institutions and practitioners, so have we in OERI significantly widened our own conception of our clientele. It no longer consists wholly of scholars, analysts and information-gatherers. It now consists at least as much, perhaps even more, of information users--the practitioners, policy-makers, journalists, parents and citizens who crave more prompt, reliable data and more pertinent, intelligible, practicable research findings. At least that is our intention and our goal. And if that entails a partial shift of resources from the conduct of new research to the explication and dissemination of sound research already "on the shelf", so be it. We'd like to do more of both, of course, but resources are tight.

I could rattle on, boasting of minor improvements in the ERIC system; of several new programs that we're administering; of a systematic OERI-wide peer review policy that is now supported by a computerized reviewer bank that presently contains the names and specialties of nearly two thousand individuals who consented to participate in it. I could tell you of the first-ever systematic evaluation of the regional

laboratories. Of some really terrific conferences. Of a couple of grants competitions that I'm pleased with in areas such as reading and literacy research and the development of indicators for the assessment of higher education. Of some additional work on the international front.

But enough. Let me instead move into a discussion of some of what doesn't satisfy me about OERI's current situation and of some worrisome signs and portents I see of things to come.

For all practical purposes, the non-statistics part of OERI is today just a pipeline carrying funds for major institutional recipients, namely centers, labs and the various pieces of the ERIC system. In the present fiscal year, out of a total appropriation of $46.6 million for everything except statistics and assessment, only $2.3 million--about five percent--is not going to those three groups of entities. This is peanuts. It is derisory. It is essentially non-existent. And it has a grave consequence. Except for our miniscule field-initiated competition, I would have to say that this year, unless you are a center, a lab or an ERIC clearinghouse, there is nothing for you in OERI. If it isn't done through something called a center, there is no research we can commission or support. We have no ability to respond to people's ideas and initiatives. And if it isn't done via a lab or ERIC, no matter how important it is, we can't support its development or dissemination, either.

I'll leave for another day my detailed appraisals of ERIC, of labs and of centers. The three categories are quite different from one another, of course, and it isn't right to lump them together. Each has some virtues; each has some frailties; each is powerfully resistant to changing its accustomed practices or emphases, however antiquated these may be; yet each has done some good. My point for now is simply that our portfolio is woefully unbalanced. No other federal research agency channels anything approaching this fraction of its total funding through large, durable institutional arrangements. In fact, I'd go so far as to say that under these circumstances OERI doesn't really qualify as a research agency; it is more accurately described as a conduit for monies earmarked by Congress for a handful of specified institutional clients and dependents.

Any sizable, durable institutional funding arrangement has certain inherent drawbacks. It is apt to be cautious rather than risk-taking; it is apt to be mainstream in its thinking rather than bold or agnostic; it is apt to be located in illustrious and well-established institutions rather than lesser known or newer places; similarly, it is apt to be led by the lords and barons of whatever the particular field of endeavor is, rather than by mere knights, let alone footsoldiers. It is, in short, not a bad deal for the

maintenance of familiar practices, familiar faces and familiar ideas. It is a far less satisfactory arrangement for fostering innovation, imagination or unconventional approaches. If you share my view that practically the entire field of education needs a lot more of the latter than it is getting, you can begin to see why I think it is dysfunctional to rely entirely on sizable, durable institutional arrangements when it comes to R & D work in this field.

Yet as the research, development and dissemination money is forced into these institutional channels, and as the statistics and assessment part of the enterprise is made organizationally separate from the research part, the research part becomes ever more vestigial. It may be that tomorrow's OERI will most accurately be described as a vibrant and skilled statistics and asssessment agency attached to a small check-writing machine that is programmed annually by Congress to write a certain number of checks to research centers, a certain number to regional labs and a certain number to ERIC clearinghouses.

This diminished and cramped version of the government's primary education research agency has several major defects. The most obvious, of course, is that all kinds of potentially important research and researchers will have nowhere to turn for support. Except for a couple of valiant private foundations, OERI has been, to all intents and purposes, the only place there is to go with a project or idea that isn't particularly mission-related, that is offbeat or unconventional, or that doesn't fit into a trendy subject or large scale research center. Insofar as OERI lacks the capacity to function that way, and I am saying to you that it already lacks most of that capacity, something of significance is lost to the entire field.

Another inexorable consequence will be the steady erosion and eventual disappearance of any real professional research competence and intellectual capability <u>within</u> the agency itself. The agency will be lobotomized, since checkwriting machines don't need staffers with scholarly credentials, keen intellects, skilled pens, or interesting ideas. The colleagueship between government staff and professionals in the field will dissipate. A "tour in Washington", at least a tour at OERI, will not be a worthwhile experience for education scholars and thinkers. We have a number of superb scholars and thinkers in OERI today. But why will their like want to come in the future?

What is more, as the agency becomes "wholly owned" by its institutional clients and their Congressional godfathers, it loses any real constituency elsewhere. In time it loses its legitimacy. It becomes thought of as "that place that doles out money to 30 or 40 identifiable institutions" rather than

an agency that supports able scholars with interesting ideas.

Can this degenerative process be arrested? Or is the disease so far advanced that all we can reasonably hope for is to keep the patient from suffering needless pain? Can the gloomy picture I've sketched be fundamentally altered? I observe that it has been going on for quite some time, long before the Finn or Bennett or Reagan eras. What gripes and saddens me is that we haven't been able to arrest it. No, we still haven't quit trying; the FY'89 budget now before Congress includes some $8.1 million for projects, programs and activities (on the "research side" of the house) that are not centers, labs or ERIC clearinghouses. This would be a significantly better balanced portfolio than today's. But we said that of our FY'88 submission, too, and ended up with the one we're holding now!

I do not believe that another organizational rearrangement would make a difference, and I doubt that the forthcoming change of administration will, either, no matter who is elected. I think the problems go deeper than the kind that can be solved by moving the furniture around or changing the names of the people sitting in it.

Gloomy though I am on this front, something else has been going on in recent years that I find both comforting and alarming, if such is possible. Even as the part of the Education Department that is explicitly devoted to education research has been shrinking, larger (and costlier) quantities of research and research-like activity have been undertaken elsewhere in the Department and in several other agencies as well. It you look across the whole Department, it turns out that some $123 million was spent on "research and development" in FY'87, of which OERI accounted for just $28 million. The biggest research funder by far was the National Institute on Disability and Rehabilitation Research; and in third place, right behind OERI, was "education of the handicapped" research. This means that the Office of Special Education and Rehabilitation Services (OSERS) administered some $73 million in research funds in FY'87, about 2.5 times as much as OERI did. Other Education Department units and programs that spent upwards of $2 million in research and development were vocational education, bilingual education, the Chapter I evaluation, and Gallaudet University. Three others were between one and two million dollars. And the FY'88 figures, when fully tabulated, will be larger still.

Mission-related education research is thriving. These programs, unlike OERI's, get appropriations larger than their budget requests. There is also mission or subject-specific education research being supported by other federal agencies. The National Science Foundation is much the largest. The arts and humanities endowments have related projects as well. And

tucked away in various corners of other agencies are projects and studies that at least bear on various aspects of education.

This is good--good for the agencies that get important and needed work done, good for the researchers who have more than one window to line up at, and in time presumably good for the field of education as well, since more will be learned about a number of important matters. But mission-oriented research is a mixed blessing. It leaves gaps and lacunae, unless one assumes (as I do not) that the missions of the several federal funding agencies add up to all the significant research needs of the field. Mission-oriented research may be singularly unresponsive to novel approaches, to little-known scholars and to heterodox conclusions. Its quality control may be uneven, since what passes for peer review may entail primarily scrutiny by aficionados of the mission.

Still, we need to recognize that federal support of education research is today most robust in those places where it isn't labelled educational research *qua* research but, rather, organized inquiry in relation to specified programs, problems, goals and missions.

Why this should be so is best explained, I believe, in terms of the utilitarian calculus that practitioners and policymakers habitually apply to education research--and the resolute refusal of most researchers to accept this. In spite of decades of trying, our field has not yet succeeded in persuading many people (save for our own fraternity members, of course) that education research is valuable or worthwhile except in situations where its work is palpably joined (in ways that any layman can understand) to "real life" issues, problems and dilemmas. Education research has always had to thread its way between the Scylla of "obscure, recherche and trivial" and the Charybdis of "obvious, commonsensical and self-evident". It hasn't done well at this. Mission-linked research is probably the best situated to appear worthwhile, useful, relevant yet also a bit mysterious. Because it is nearly always "applied" research (or development), it is also the most apt to be picked up and used by practitioners and policymakers.

Yet I'm reluctant to settle for an exclusive diet of mission-related education research, and I rather suspect that others in the field are even more reluctant. Significant issues and authentic problems will go unexamined and interesting leads unexplored, countless hypotheses unexamined. Scholars know this, and are apt to care. But who, if anyone, outside "the field" also cares about such matters? Here we begin to get to the bad news that I'm bearing today. Though a handful of thoughtful association leaders are conscientious advocates and sophisticated consumers --Al Shanker, Scott

Thomson and Sam Sava come to mind, as do Tom Shannon and Gordon Ambach--there is no keen appetite "out there" in most of the education world for more or better research. It isn't that people are opposed; ask them straight out if they think that it would be a good idea to devote more resources to education research and they're almost sure to respond in the affirmative. But this is the "motherhood and apple pie" response, and is not matched by any overpowering impulse to do anything--either to see that resources are furnished so that more and better research can be done or to make conscientious use of the results of that which already has been done.

I'm not going to belabor this point or try very hard to prove it. It is well understood by everyone in Washington and by practically everyone in the field of education, if not in this association. And it is a situation that hasn't fundamentally changed in decades. Except that matters have worsened as it has become clearer that the primary advocates and supporters of education research are education researchers.

In this respect education resembles the law more than medicine. In law, so far as I can tell, practitioners and policymakers are largely oblivious to what emerges from the research carried out by law school professors; save for the occasional citation of a law review article that is encountered now and again in the footnotes of court decisions, the research train and the practice train are running on different tracks. And I do not think it coincidental that there is very little government funding of legal research, inasmuch as its principal consumers and beneficiaries appear to be those who are engaged in its production.

In medicine, by contrast, practically the entire field of practice has evolved into conscientious consumers of research findings. So, in many respects, has the general media, the policy-making community, perhaps even the public-at-large. Not only do the doctors subscribe to and read the research journals in their field, but often en route to the office in the morning I hear on the regular radio news an account of some research findings being reported in the latest edition of the New England Journal of Medicine. When is the last time you heard the network news summarize a study from an AERA journal? Or even from the Phi Delta Kappan?

It will be said by some in the field, and indeed has been written by some present and former AERA presidents, that part of my job and Secretary Bennett's job is to be effective salesmen for education research, so effective that practitioners will begin to fall all over themselves in their eagerness to put its findings into practice, so effective that members of Congress will vie with one another to lavish funds on it. Well, I don't propose to be defensive or to dwell on

this. I will merely assert that we have done what we could to foster the demand for and the appreciation and utilization of education research. We have also labored to expand its supply by our efforts to obtain additional resources with which to underwrite its production. Perhaps more could have been done but I'm damned if I know what or how.

There is an assumption among at least part of this organization's leadership that perhaps the next team will fare better; that they will be somehow less political, more lovable, more inclined to utter mild amiabilities, better disposed toward the education establishment, or more kindly toward the academic community in general, or at least better liked on Capitol Hill. Perhaps this will turn out to be so. And perhaps its being so will lead to a golden age of federal support for education research. And if you seriously believe this, there are a couple of bridges across the Potomac that you might also like to consider purchasing.

To sit around waiting for the next team to reach the arena is simply naive. The problem this field faces in Washington is not a dearth of advocates and spokesmen in the executive branch, nor is it Republicans or conservatives. Consider the recent remarks of William A. (Buddy) Blakey, a liberal Democrat, now a senior aide to Senator Paul Simon and formerly the Deputy Assistant Secretary of H.E.W. for education legislation during the palmiest, most liberal, most Democratic days of the Carter administration: "If you leave researchers to their druthers," Blakey observes, "They will come up with largely an irrelevant research agenda. Congress still believes education research is more contemplative of the naval than anything that will benefit education".

I don't think he is wrong, much as I wish he were. I'm not going to bestow any "Golden Fleece Awards" here, but will admit that I winced a bit the other day when someone passed me an education journal article entitled "Does Counselor Body Posture Make a Difference?" with the suggestion that this is typical of education research. The important point today, however, is not what I think. It is that influential folk on Capitol Hill believe these allegations to be true, and those folk will be in their jobs long after I'm gone from mine.

All of this says to me that proceeding in the now familiar mode is not going to yield any dramatic change in the reputation or prospects of education research in Washington. No matter what I say to you today, the AERA is not apt to emerge as a potent lobbying force; it never has been; and I don't believe that deep down its leaders want it to be. In any case, so long as the modal response of the AERA leadership to a problem in Washington is to put a letter in the mail, it will continue to be ineffectual no matter how erudite or well-informed its letter-writers may be. (Most of those

missives, incidentally, arrive long after the matter is settled.) Meanwhile, the representatives of institutional interests are all over Congress (and sometimes the executive branch as well), earmarking this, setting-aside that, restricting the other, blocking unwanted changes, preserving the status quo--and funding it more generously. The AERA is up in the bleachers clapping--or hissing--while everyone else is down playing on the field.

What is needed now is something on the order of a paradigm shift. We need a new way of thinking about education research, at least in relation to the federal government. And I believe that the way may be pointed by the relative success of mission-related research, with its inherent appeal to the utilitarian mind and its eminent practicality.

What if we stopped talking about education research qua research. Just stopped talking about it. Let us quietly acknowledge that virtually nobody outside this organization much cares about its fate and that those who do care are unable to do much about it. Let us instead identify the real-world problems that we might be able to help solve, the programs that we might be able to improve via enhanced knowledge and clearer understanding, and the interests that we might fruitfully ally ourselves with. Let us, in effect, redefine the constituency of education research (as OERI has redefined its constituency) to consist in large measure of potential users and consumers rather than fellow scholars. Let usefulness and practical value, rather than journal citations and tenure decisions, become our dominant criteria. And let them also dictate our funding strategies.

What would that mean in practice? As regards federal funding, it might, for example, mean building into the major "action" programs some modest earmarks or setasides --one percent, half a percent--for related studies, evaluations and systematic inquiries. What are the issues embedded in those programs, and of concern to the people served by those programs, that would benefit from experimentation, evaluation, analysis? Reasonable questions, no? But, of course, researchers have no automatic "claim" on these resources. We must first make common cause with governors and chief state school officers, with teacher organizations and school board associations, with state legislators and vocational educators, with principals and superintendents, with private schools and community colleges. The list is familiar enough. Making common cause with them carries with it the possibility of becoming passengers on their trains rather than continually trying to attach an engine to our own caboose.

This is not a new idea. The AERA itself began conversations with some other education groups during Lauren Resnick's distinguished year as Association president. It was

a good start. It has not, however, been followed through on. I'm not sure why. The association has lapsed back into a mode of griping, lamenting, kvetching--and writing those belated letters.

I don't know for sure that education researchers are willing to pay the price associated with "making common cause". It is non-trivial. It includes having much more of the research agenda built around practical, "real world" issues of immediate interest to practitioners and policy makers. It entails stricter timetables, even deadlines--things not necessarily congenial to the rhythms of scholarship. It means writing up one's results in plain English; drawing their practical implications in even plainer English; publishing them in places where they have a chance of being seen by practitioners and policy-makers; even providing "technical assistance" to some of those practitioners and policy-makers.

Shocking to contemplate, isn't it? And that is why I find it entirely plausible that the education research community would rather maintain its purity and preserve its traditional culture, even though that likely destines most of its members to relative poverty, obscurity and irrelevance. Those at the pinnacle of the field will fare satisfactorily; so will those with godfathers; and those in wealthy, illustrious institutions. They will either get support for their work from federal sources or they will get it from nonfederal sources. They'll endure.

But others--younger, less luminous, less well connected, less well placed, with more esoteric or more philosophical interests--won't fare well at all. They don't today. They won't tomorrow. Unless they are willing to make some of these tradeoffs and take the associated risks.

If this strategy succeeds, in time it could also foster a modest rebirth of more fundamental research, tucked away within--and shielded by--the mission-related work. For when there is a sizable research enterprise with a solid reputation for usefulness, timeliness and practicality, it becomes far easier to persuade the constituents of that enterprise to devote a fraction of its funds and energies to looking further down the road, laying the groundwork for imaginative solutions to tomorrow's problems rather than grappling only with today's. At that point, a federal agency--or agencies--with broader, less prescriptive and more basic agendas would have reasonable prospects for success.

One cannot be certain that the "common cause" strategy will work. The researchers, as I have said, may want nothing to do with it. The prospective allies and putative beneficiaries may spurn all overtures, too, quite possibly because the record to date gives them scant basis for expecting sufficient returns on the energy and resources that

would need to be invested.

OERI has some relevant experience here, though, that I find generally heartening. Our increasingly close collaborative efforts with such organizations as the National Governors Association and the Council of Chief State School Officers seem to me to prove that such joint ventures can be mutually beneficial. I am heartened as well by our ability to work with a network of urban school superintendents, and with state higher education officials. Similarly, when we publish a "translation" of research into English and thousands of copies are reproduced and distributed by the A.F.T. and by school superintendents in places like St. Paul and San Diego, one can sense the appetite out there for good information, intelligibly presented.

I find it odd, and a little paradoxical, that as OERI has been dwindling it has also been demonstrating the possibility of renewal and even rebirth. Maybe I'm just dizzy from the fact that spring has arrived and the Passover and Easter seasons always rekindle one's awareness that winter isn't permanent after all. I hope that turns out to be true of education research as well. The ice and snow have been accumulating for far too long.